



## Director's Desk

Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.  
Director

It goes without saying, but still, it is sometimes good to be reminded: DHS exists to serve our patients and to serve them well. Amidst all of our various priorities, initiatives, projects, and competing demands, sometimes I fear the patient and his or her voice is lost in the mix. But we need to hear that voice. We need to hear it more often and in more settings. And we need to let the words not just roll off, but sink in deep and affect what we are doing and how we are doing it. After all, we are doing the work for them.

This issue of the Pulse highlights our burgeoning Patient Family Advisory Councils (PFAC), which are active or ramping up in each of our facilities. The PFAC give our patients and their families an opportunity to help shape the

services and programs we offer. It gives them a voice and platform that hasn't always been readily available, but which we sorely need if we are going to successfully transform ourselves into a provider of choice for the residents of Los Angeles County. And equally as importantly, the PFAC gives us an opportunity to grow in humility and generosity toward those we serve. It takes courage and strength to open up our doors and allow others to peer inside and offer input on what they see.

I encourage you to learn more about the PFAC progress in your facility or unit, and to take advantage of other ways to ask patients for their input and listen to the responses. I hope you will find it to be transformational.

Also included attached to this issue is a new feature, the *DHS Spotlight*. The *Spotlight* is a brief two page summary of a program or initiative within DHS. We hope you will find it to be a helpful way to learn more about the good work going on across the system and the impact it is having on our patients. As always, if you have suggestions for future Pulse articles, or now for the *Spotlight*, please pass these along to the editors.

## In This Issue

- Building Up Patient Family Advisory Councils in DHS
- Rancho Works Café and Gift Shop: Changing the image of disability to ability, one job at a time
- Improved Colorectal Cancer Screening Tool Created

## Building Up Patient Family Advisory Councils in DHS

By Miguel Renteria

As part of our commitment to engage patients and families in their care, teams from LAC+USC Medical Center, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, and eight health care center groups from our Ambulatory Care Network (ACN) consisting of Coastal, High Desert, Martin Luther King, Jr., South LA, East LA, Metro LA, San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys are working towards building up Patient Family Advisory Councils (PFAC) in their environment. PFAC aim to provide a sustainable structure to engage the patient family perspective in addressing strategic priorities. An anchor to PFACs is to invite patients and their respective families to serve on councils as advisors; to share their voice and perspective to better understand their experience with our services. Patient Family Advisors (PFAs) are partners in the co-design of solutions that improve the patient experience, quality and safety at our facilities. They are people with lived experience in our health system that have the capacity and inclination to partner effectively so that all efforts are aligned with what is important to the population we serve. All teams are participating in the Patient and Family Centered Care Partners Gateways to [PFAC learning collaborative](#). This 6-month learning collaborative will take us through a deliberate approach to integrate our patients' voices in our organization. The collaborative began with creating a vision and charter, we are now in the process of developing a recruitment plan for patients and family members to join our PFACs. Future learning sessions will include topics on orienting patient advisors, launching our first meeting and sustaining PFAC practices. Harbor-UCLA Medical Center completed this learning collaborative in 2018 and has established a PFAC with a promising future. The Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center Patient Advisory



DHS team at the 2019 PFCC Conference

Council, established in 2010, is an active partner in improvement activities across the facility and is a great model for all. After this collaborative, DHS will have PFACs at each of the 4 hospitals and 8 ACN health center groups. We will also have PFAs within 3 Continuous Improvement Teams (CITs).

Patient and Family Centered Care Partners recently held their annual conference at the California Endowment Center in Los Angeles. Over 30 team members participating in the Gateways to PFAC learning collaborative attended the conference. The conference provided team members with an opportunity to gain insight from the various breakout sessions and network with organizations on similar journeys. The patient family engagement stories shared at the conference were inspiring and heartfelt. Many team members felt that attending the conference was a great learning opportunity and provided vast momentum to continue moving this work forward.



## Rancho Works Café and Gift Shop: Changing the image of disability to ability, one job at a time

By Rochessa Washington

The Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop is a program at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center (Rancho) - a facility of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS) - that supports patients recovering from disabling conditions to gain and practice job skills in a real work environment. The Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop sells a menu of affordably priced, healthy food choices and handcrafted novelty items to serve the needs of patients, staff, visitors and the community. Participants learn fundamental job skills and have the opportunity to practice work habits in a supportive work environment. The goal for participants is to sharpen their work skills and increase their confidence before transitioning to competitive employment in the community.

The Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop is located at the main lobby of the new Outpatient Building. Rancho opened in 1888 as a Los Angeles County Poor Farm, where people of different abilities



were given a chance to live and work as contributing members of their community. The story continues through the Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop. The program, under the Occupational Therapy Vocational Services Department and operated by Rancho Research Institute, builds on that legacy of inclusivity and productivity. It enables participants (patients) of all diagnoses, abilities, and backgrounds to regain a sense of self-esteem and well-being through work-related activities.

As part of this employment training program, participants assist 3-6 hours a day with running the day-to-day operation of the Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop. Participants learn how to stock shelves, monitor inventory, complete sales transactions, and manage bookkeeping. They learn sanitary procedures for safe food handling under a limited food preparation license and cottage food operation permit, as well as essential work behaviors, ethics, and customer service. They also learn



how to write a résumé, fill out an application, and practice how to interview so that they are prepared for gainful employment. Participants are able to use their work experience in the Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop as a reference on their résumé.

Our goal is to actively partner with other community programs who share similar objectives, visions and missions as a way to assist program graduates with a structured means to become gainfully employed and be productive members of their communities. By partnering with these programs, the Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop ensures that participants are truly ready for work and serves as a bridge for participants to transition back into the community with valuable skills that can be utilized by local businesses such as restaurants, retail stores, farmer's markets and community service programs.

One participant, Lorena, was referred to the program to explore her readiness to return to work. Before her stroke, she worked as a forklift driver for a cosmetics company where she also set up for trade shows. While participating in Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop program she increased her standing tolerance, improved her ability to use her weak arm, and learned new strategies to effectively participate in work-related activities. She is a valued member of the team and is looking forward to reaching her goal of full employment in the community!

The Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop is open Monday - Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Rancho Works Café & Gift Shop program, with the goal of providing patients opportunities to go back to work or engage in productive, meaningful activity.

## Improved Colorectal Cancer Screening Tool Created

By Girlie Caballero, RN

Colorectal Cancer is the 3rd leading cause of death in the world. It has a 71%-90% 5-yr survival rate if caught localized.

In December 2017, a gentleman came in to one of our San Fernando Valley Health Center Group (SFVHCG) labs to turn in a fecal immunochemical test (FIT) kit to test for colorectal cancer.

However, the lab technician would not accept the specimen. The gentleman was told that the specimen was not collected properly and could not be processed because he had brought a bag full of specimen (stool). The gentleman became upset because he had taken time off from work and hand delivered the specimen only to be rejected. The situation got escalated and the gentleman was sent to Patient Relations to handle the situation. The Nursing Director, Armenui Telliyan, was called to assist. While using therapeutic communication to talk to the gentleman, she learned that the patient had an engineering degree. The gentleman stated, "I'm a smart guy but this is not a good instruction sheet for anyone to follow. If I can't understand it, nobody could." Mrs. Telliyan assured



An excerpt from the improved instruction sheet



him that she would use the specimen he turned in by putting it on the correct specimen card; furthermore, she indicated that she would work on creating a better instruction sheet. The gentleman was grateful.

Thereafter, the Nursing leadership team, in collaboration with the Quality Improvement (QI) nurse and one of our staff who is also a talented photographer gathered around the table and brainstormed. A production date followed, with SFVHCG staff featuring our new health education tool.

One year later, after the pilot implementation, Continuous Improvement Team (CIT) input, administration

and our wonderful staffs' support, we were able to see our hard work bear great results.

Staff and patients found the resulting instruction sheet much easier to understand and follow with the expectation that more patients would follow through and submit the FIT test to look for colorectal cancer. One staff member from the lab stated that, "(FIT) specimens are no longer coming in 'messy'." We are pleased that our contribution helps a greater cause: the fight against this very preventable disease, Colorectal Cancer.



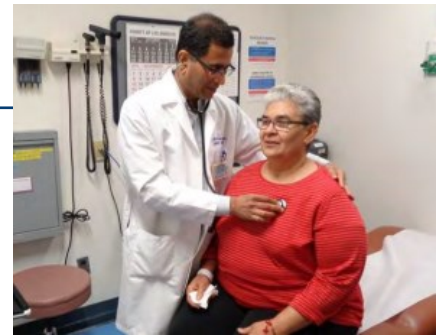
# DHS SPOTLIGHT

MyWellness Patient Portal

February 2019

## Why are we doing this?

We serve passionately so that our communities can flourish. One way we serve is by giving patients easier ways to access their health information and manage their care.



## What is the MyWellness Patient Portal?

The MyWellness Patient Portal is a website and a mobile app where patients can:

- View lab and radiology results
- Request appointments
- View upcoming appointments with a facility map
- Request Rx refills
- Read provider notes
- Message their care team

**2015**  
MyWellness  
Patient Portal  
launched

**2016**  
Upgrades:  
Provider and care  
team messaging,  
appointment  
requests, refill  
requests

**2017**  
Upgrade:  
View  
radiology  
results

**2018**  
Upgrade:  
Read  
provider  
notes

☒ Doubled the number of active users

**53k**

Enrolled  
Patients

**25k**

Monthly  
Active Users

**75%**

Use  
Mobile

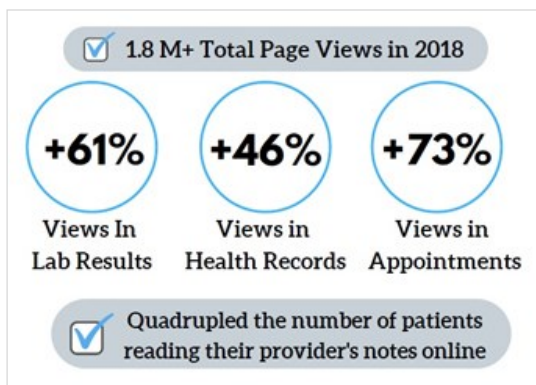
Over 53,000 patients are enrolled in the MyWellness Patient Portal, and over half of those patients use the portal each month. Over the past year, we have doubled the number of patients enrolled in the portal.

“I love the portal! I can sit down after I get the kids to bed and really think about what questions I have for my child’s doctor and send a message. It’s nice to have that kind of connection with my doctor.” – Portal patient

## What has been the impact?

### Improved Access to Health Information

The portal allows patients to readily access their personal health information without requiring a conversation or visit with a health care professional, such as like getting lab or radiology results or requesting an appointment. It also gives patients the opportunity to handle routine matters, such as requesting an appointment, refilling a prescription. This allows our staff time to focus more of their time on high priority patient care activities, enabling them to provide more effective services to everyone.



## Improved Patient Compliance

Patients who read provider notes are more likely to comply with their doctor's orders after their visit, and are more informed for their next visit, increasing the quality of their interaction.

## Direct Communication with Care Team

Patients can message their care teams directly, sharing information, asking questions, or requesting advice when needed. Providers who were worried

**"I save time by messaging patients through the portal instead of relying on repeated phone calls and voicemails."**

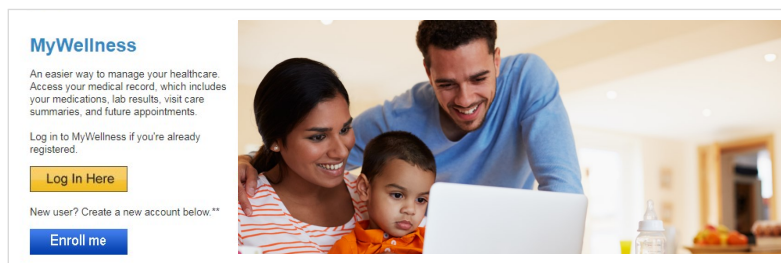
– Urgent Care Provider,  
Harbor-UCLA Medical Center

about a drastic increase in volume of patient communications have not seen that happen. Messages are triaged first by the care team so that providers only receive relevant messages.

## Where do we go from here?

### Patient Voices

It's critical to hear from the patients themselves to ensure their needs are met, so we hope to create a digital patient advisory group to improve the functionality and usability of the portal.



### Increase Enrollment

An enrollment competition among DHS and DPH departments has resulted in a 10% increase in enrolled patients each month since November 2018. To do this moving forward, we will:

- Ask every patient for their email address
- Send every patient with an email account an enrollment invitation
- Improve patient education about how to use the portal
- Engage specialty, nursing, and inpatient leaders in enrollment efforts

### Focus on Continuous Improvement

- Improve the "Find a Provider by Name" search
- Make it easier to switch to the Spanish version of the portal
- Add more features to allow patients greater access and ability to manage their own health
- Improve usability
- Continue to drive internal measures like the creation of the MyWellness work group and the development of the Primary Care Toolkit

## Acknowledgments

The patient portal effort is a success because so many staff have been involved in actively enrolling patients and helping them learn more about the portal. The patient portal effort is led by Dr. Anshu Abhat, DHS Director of Digital Engagement, who is passionate about engaging patients in their care, and includes Sara Simmons and the IT team, patient access staff, providers and care teams, Rancho Peer Mentors, and many others.



**DHS  
SPOTLIGHT**

For more information on this publication, contact [communications@dhs.lacounty.gov](mailto:communications@dhs.lacounty.gov)